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ABSTRACT

Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education (SAGE) is a project of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade/Office of Women in Development (EGAT/WID). Five countries participated in SAGE: Guinea, Mali, Ghana, El Salvador; and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The project started in March 1999 and ended in July 2002. During that time SAGE mobilized local partners and provided them with capacity-building technical services to support girls' education. They also convened a national and international conference and conducted research studies to document the contributions of nontraditional partners in supporting girls' education. This report summarizes the experiences and lessons learned in using this multisectoral approach. The report describes the multisectoral model as it was originally envisioned by U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and how it evolved into the implementation strategy used by SAGE in project countries. The country cases illustrate the approach that can be implemented in terms of differing local rationales, partners, activities, results, and efforts to promote sustainability. The report states that the cases suggest specific lessons about implementation and present general conclusions about multisectoral strategies as tools in improving the conditions for girls education. It gives guidance and advice for making the best use of multisectoral approaches. (Contains 36 references.) (BT)

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# Multisectoral Approaches in Advancing Girls' Education: Lessons Learned in Five SAGE Countries. SAGE Technical Report No. 4.

Andrea Rugh

Academy for Educational Development, Washington, DC.
USAID

SO 034 387

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Andrea Rugh

# Multisectoral Approaches in Advancing Girls' Education

## Lessons Learned in Five SAGE Countries

# Multisectoral Approaches in Promoting Girls' Education

## Lessons Learned in Five SAGE Countries

Andrea Rugh

July 2002

Produced by the Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education project
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# Foreword

Approximately 25 years ago, a small group of people started working in the field of girls' education. At that time, the majority of those working in international development efforts had not yet recognized the importance of assessing the equity and quality of education from a gender perspective. Fewer even recognized the validity of the "gender lens" and how it could help identify both constraints and solutions in educational development.

Twenty-five years ago, some sought to discourage those of us who recognized the critical importance of reforming basic education systems from that particular angle, the angle of girls' education. They tried to convince us that girls' education was simply a fad, that basic education was gender neutral, and differentiating between girls and boys was unnecessary.

The good news is that, 25 years later, those who work in international development are now convinced that girls' education is a must. Many believe it is probably the single most important investment in international development. It seems all development specialists became advocates for girls' education and recognize its powerful impact on other areas of development. Policymakers, researchers, and practitioners frequently highlight the benefits of girls' education.

These benefits are well known today. They include improving family health and nutrition, enhancing reproductive health, increasing family income, improving the skills and knowledge of women farmers, enabling women to play a more significant role in their communities, increasing political participation, and democratizing decisionmaking processes at community and national levels.

The good news is that credible visionaries and world leaders, such as UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, continuously highlight the role and powerful impact of girls' education and describe it as an accelerator of progress and human development.

What remains to be done is to make it totally apparent that education with a "gender lens" benefits girls ***and*** boys, and that educational programs without that lens will always produce inequitable results and hamper quality. Most importantly, what remains to be done is to continue deepening and refining our knowledge of the constraints and solutions to girls' education within the specificity of each context. That balance between what we know through our past experiences, and what we need to learn while designing and implementing new girls' education initiatives, is a key concept that is necessary to move forward. What is important is to keep adding to the strategies that are already known new strategies that will allow us to design and implement education programs that will increase the enrollment, retention, and achievement of girls within quality education systems.

This document is about one of these innovative approaches, the multisectoral approach to education from a gender perspective, and the lessons learned by implementing this approach.

M. Rihani

May A. Rihani
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# Executive Summary

Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education (SAGE) is a project of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Bureau for Economic Growth, Agriculture and Trade/Office of Women in Development (EGAT/WID).[1] The project's aim has been to mobilize broad-based, multisectoral constituencies to improve the educational participation of girls. Five countries participated in SAGE: Guinea, Mali, Ghana, El Salvador, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The project started in March 1999 and ended in July 2002. During this time SAGE mobilized local partners and provided them with capacity-building technical services to support girls' education. SAGE also convened national and international conferences and conducted research studies to inform and document the contributions of "nontraditional" partners in supporting girls' education. This report summarizes the experiences and lessons learned in using this approach. Much of the evidence comes from project documents and a lessons-learned conference held in Elmina, Ghana in May 2002.

The report describes the multisectoral model as it was originally envisioned by USAID and as it evolved into the implementation strategy used by SAGE in project countries. The country cases illustrate a variety of ways the approach can be implemented in terms of differing local rationales, partners, activities, results, and efforts to promote sustainability. The cases suggest specific lessons about implementation and present general conclusions about multisectoral strategies as tools in improving the conditions for girls' education. Finally, the report suggests some guidance and advice for making the best use of multisectoral approaches.

There were two main innovations in USAID's original model: 1) the call to involve nontraditional sectors (business, media, and religious) in addressing issues related to girls' education, and 2) the commitment of funds primarily to mobilizing sectoral partners rather than implementing specific project activities. Under SAGE, the two traditional sectors (government and private-voluntary and nongovernmental organinzations [PVO/NGOs]) were included with the nontraditional partners to achieve more sustainable results. From the start, therefore, a significant lesson learned under SAGE was the importance of linking these five sectors to form a productive and enduring environment in which to address girls' issues.

SAGE has contributed insight into how multisectoral strategies can most effectively be used to serve girls' education. Specifically, more is now known about how each sector can be approached, and about their potentialities and limitations in terms of supporting girls' education. In mobilizing partners to address complex issues, SAGE has shown the importance of establishing groups that broadly represent national and local stakeholders, while at the same time creating smaller working groups that act effectively to execute their decisions. Partners are more likely to become engaged if they share the common vision of girls' participation and feel their involvement promotes the declared interests of their group. Once engaged they need to be linked productively to others in order to coordinate activities and build on the special strengths each contributes.

SAGE confirms that multisectoral approaches are more likely to positively affect girls' education if certain conditions exist, including dynamic leadership at all levels, mutual respect of partners, shared responsibilities, local resolution of problems, solutions that fit local conditions and values, good communication, and flexible strategies that adapt to new understandings and opportunities.

[1] EGAT/WID was formerly the Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support and Research/Office of Women in Development (G/WID).

To prove effective as implementing agencies, multiple sectors and levels need to be linked horizontally and vertically to ensure coordination, coverage, and impact. SAGE demonstrated that entry into ongoing relationships could happen at almost any point (e.g., national, regional, or local) that was convenient in terms of mobilizing partners and maximizing results. Pitfalls to avoid were too much reliance on outsiders to solve problems, not involving the public sector sufficiently to sustain school level initiatives, duplication of effort that wastes resources, or gaps that flaw the reform. Positive influences on any part of the system have the potential to affect the whole, while remaining constraints can similarly act to reduce overall results.

An important aim of a multisectoral approach is to create an environment where progress can be sustained. This is more likely to happen when norms encourage girls' participation, activities are built on structures that continue to exist after the project terminates, and capacity-building investments are sustained by tools, training modules, and trained individuals that can continue to build needed skills. The tools are more likely to prove useful if they have been developed locally and are perceived as useful by those who created them. Institutionalized routines for meetings, reporting, monitoring, and reflecting also help sustain effective networks over time.

During SAGE mobilization initiatives, local people identified activities they believed would promote girls' education. While most of these activities are not new, they gain credibility because local people identified them and invested in them as ways of increasing girls' participation. They included: mobilizing community members and groups to solve problems, establishing new norms of participation with support from religious leaders and the media, encouraging active female role models through the involvement of women in community organizations and providing them leadership training, creating role model calendars, training in gender sensitivity, learning to develop and implement action plans, building classrooms and latrines, establishing mentoring groups and clubs, and providing relevant life skills content in school programs. New to most of the countries, on the other hand, was fundraising to support girls' education and exploring the possibilities of income-generating activities to reduce the burden of school costs to parents. A number of innovative ideas were also implemented for communicating messages about the importance of girls' education through the media and other means.

SAGE experience suggests that a multisectoral model is a valid tool in addressing girls' participation issues, particularly where the barriers to girls' education are complex and touch upon many sectors. When applied effectively, multisectoral approaches can both leverage current activities toward greater action and more immediate impact, and create the long-term "enabling" environment that can sustain progress. Such a comprehensive approach is, of course, demanding. Mobilizing multiple sectors, finding the resources to support their activities, and developing coordination mechanisms take time and effort. This use of human and financial resources must be weighed against the potential of different options. If problems can be solved in a simpler way by focusing on one or two sectors, then that should be the approach of choice. The advantage of mobilizing multisectoral partners is the increased range of issues that can be addressed. The disadvantage is that the more sectors involved, the more substantial the energies required to mobilize them.

Future multisectoral approaches can profit from SAGE experience. This experience suggests that a number of issues are important:

- Developing an initial understanding of the main constraints on girls' education in order to know the sectors that may prove most effective in addressing them.
- Focusing on (and measuring) progress in indicators of girls' education to ensure that activities assumed to achieve those goals are effective.
- Conducting limited and inexpensive formative experiments (as Guinea did when it compared two "treatments" levels of support) to inform decisionmaking.
- Providing relevant and proportional technical assistance that also develops the skills of appropriate application.
- Keeping progress matrices to know where gaps need to be filled and which partners have been selected to cover the gaps. It is important that no gap remains unaddressed even when it is difficult.
- Issues related to girls' continuation, dropout, completion and performance cannot be fully resolved (no matter what the level of multisectoral effort) until public sector partners address these program quality issues more effectively.

Overall SAGE countries showed clear evidence that their multisectoral strategies produced 1) greater overall consciousness of girls' issues, 2) more and varied actors working on behalf of girls' education; and 3) more strategies addressing constraints on girls' participation. The countries modeled participatory processes that increased the capacity of local civil society organizations to solve these and other development problems. Their insistence on inclusionary practices gave women and girls more decisionmaking power over their own lives, thus encouraging changes that may prove even more significant over time.

The bottom line from SAGE experience is that multiple sectors can be mobilized to act on behalf of girls' education, they can overcome many of the constraints that prevent girls' participation, and they can do so while relying mainly on their own resources. This SAGE evidence provides a strong mandate for using multisectoral approaches to address many of the complex issues of girls' education.

# 1. Introduction

## Background

Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education (SAGE) is a project of USAID's EGAT/Office of Women in Development that is implemented by the Academy for Educational Development (AED) through a contract with Development Alternatives, Inc. SAGE activities address Strategic Support Objective 2 (SO2) of the EGAT/WID office: "Broad-based, informed constituencies mobilized to improve girls' education in emphasis countries." The indicator of achievement is "Improved rates of girls' completion of primary school in program areas of emphasis countries." This strategic objective, elaborated in the USAID-funded Girls' and Women's Education Activity (GWEA), called for using a multisectoral approach in addressing the issues of girls' education. SAGE used this approach in five selected countries.

SAGE was initiated in March 1999 and ended in July 2002. During this time a program of technical services was designed and implemented in Guinea and Mali starting in 1999, and Ghana, the Congo, and El Salvador in 2001. In addition, international conferences were convened and research studies conducted to inform and document the efficacy of mobilizing traditional and nontraditional partners to address the issues of girls' educational participation.

## Purpose of this report

This report summarizes the experiences and lessons learned from using a multisectoral approach to address girls' issues in the five participating SAGE countries. It is intended as a stand-alone document with summary descriptions of project activities in each country complete enough to suggest ideas for those wanting to adapt and apply a multisectoral approach in other contexts. Most of the conclusions are drawn from plenary and group discussions and marketplace exhibitions at SAGE's Lessons Learned Conference, which was held in Elmina, Ghana May 6–9, 2002. This conference helped sharpen the focus of SAGE activities and differentiate universal elements from those that depend on opportunities and constraints in the local context. Background and clarification information for this report also comes from SAGE project documents and other project experience. A similar and relevant activity was reported on at the American Institutes of Research (AIR) Girls' Education Activity (GEA) Lessons Learned Conference in August 2001. GEA in the first phase of GWEA used the multisectoral approach in three additional countries, Guatemala, Morocco, and Peru.

This report is not an assessment or evaluation of SAGE, nor is it an end-of-project report. It is not a "proceedings" document from the conference in Ghana. It is, rather, a document that extracts lessons learned from the rich experience in implementing a multisectoral approach in the five SAGE countries. What has been learned from SAGE experience is not immutable lessons with no capacity for modification or change. Instead this experience provided a more in-depth understanding of what seems to work well in the EGAT/WID multisectoral model, and why it works even when conditions vary across countries. This report is therefore to be regarded as a "taking stock" so future attempts to use this approach can benefit from the new understandings and avoid or at least be made aware of its potential pitfalls.

## Report organization, audiences and cautions

The report has eight sections: 1) this introduction, which provides background on the report purposes, organization, audiences, and cautions; 2) USAID's goals and expectation for the approach, its guiding assumptions and principles, and the evolution of the model; 3) the SAGE project, its framework, organization, and

activities; 4) illustrative cases from five countries participating in the SAGE project; 5) findings about lessons learned from the country programs; 6) general conclusions about the multisectoral model; 7) suggestions for improvements for future activities; and 8) the questions that remain unresolved about the multisectoral approach.

The audiences for this report are expected to be project participants, USAID officials, SAGE administrators, development practitioners faced with similar issues of girls' education, and researchers studying the impact of various approaches on girls' participation. In the past researchers and developers have called for more candid reflection on project initiatives and impacts. It is hoped that this "lessons learned" document will provide information that permits more effective designs in the future.

The models and conclusions drawn from this "Lessons Learned" Report should be applied with caution: 1) The "solutions" SAGE implemented to the constraints limiting girls' participation were chosen at the time because of the EGAT/WID focus on multisectoral partnerships, as well as for such practical reasons as the willingness in these five project countries of local partners to become involved. Other options might well have produced the same results. 2) Any initiative, no matter how effective in a given context, needs to be adapted to a new context. One of the main findings of this report is the importance of flexibility in applying the multisectoral model. An adaptation usually works best when local people modify the model to fit their own institutional potentialities and contexts.

# 2. The multisectoral model

## USAID's goals and expectations

In promoting a multisectoral model through its Girls' and Women's Education Activity, EGAT/WID set as a primary objective the mobilization of broad-based, informed constituencies to improve girls' education. This was to be achieved through activities that strengthened the performance of a range of public and private sector institutions improved knowledge of girls' education issues mobilized leadership broadened local community participation expanded social support and local resources for girls' education from nontraditional partners strengthened teacher performance to improve girls' primary school participation

Country coordinators funded by the project were to bring together multiple sectors from national and subnational levels and provide technical assistance and other help as needed to these participating groups and organizations to solve their own problems with girls' education.

## Evolution of the model

The multisectoral approach is not new to development nor to girls' issues. Earlier development assistance to education was provided almost exclusively through the public sector institutions of education ministries. That proved insufficient as attention was turning to girls' education, so a new model evolved that added partners with local impact in the community. At first this was done through expanding government interactions with the community, but later it occurred through national and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), and in some cases international private voluntary organizations (PVOs) with expertise in community mobilization. This "traditional" multisectoral model of donor support for public and NGO entities was the precursor to the GWEA model.

With pressure building in international forums to achieve Education for All (EFA) as rapidly as possible, it again became clear that the slow pace of government would not enable developers to meet these EFA deadlines, even with the community mobilization efforts of NGOs. The EGAT/WID model was one of the responses to this dilemma. It sought to expand the efforts on behalf of girls' education by mobilizing "nontraditional" business, media, and religious sectors in support of the traditional public and NGO efforts. The EGAT/WID model was predicated on the assumption that to prosper, girls' education required more resources (business), wider communication and advocacy of the importance of girls' education (media), and the crucial support of religious institutions (that were assumed to be constraining girls' education in some countries). What was new in this model, as EGAT/WID designed it, was the expressed intent of involving a number of sectors and putting financial resources exclusively into mobilization of the sectors rather than into the activities that were implemented. The mobilized sectors had to find their own resources.

Under the first phase of GWEA implementation in Morocco, Guatemala, and Peru, the original model prevailed that excluded significant interactions with public and NGO sectors. The basic idea was that since these two traditional sectors had failed to bring about comprehensive change, three new sectors should be brought in to fill the gaps. However, it was felt that the impacts would not be as great in several countries (Ghana, Guinea, and Mali especially) without significant involvement of the government and PVO/NGO sectors. The government provided access to schools and school programs and the NGO sector to communities, and both had important roles to play in disseminating successful innovations. Consequently, the model under SAGE was broadened by engaging these traditional sectors and

making their inclusion more flexible. Also during the first GWEA phase, the model had followed fairly similar steps in each country, usually starting with the convening of a national conference followed by setting up some kind of permanent national network. By contrast, the SAGE activity usually began by engaging a "partner of convenience" with established access to national or local structures that made it possible to broaden and intensify efforts on behalf of girls' education. Together these changes completed the model's evolution from a fairly rigid prescription for action into a flexible, pragmatic approach to the accomplishment of girls' education goals—making it more dynamic and responsive to the potentialities on the ground.

While a multisectoral approach in theory has the potential to address a complex issue like girls' education effectively, it is in implementation that the advantages and disadvantages emerge and where lessons can be learned about how to use this approach.

# 3. The SAGE project

## SAGE assumptions and principles

The main assumption underlying the SAGE multisectoral model was that its broad scope provided the best means of addressing a multifaceted issue like girls' education. Each sector would make distinct contributions by raising public awareness of the issues, mobilizing communities to implement solutions, and expanding resources that could be devoted to girls' education. The original EGAT/WID model prescribed a limited number of relevant partners, while the SAGE model evolved to meet various country conditions as well as the emerging needs for effective implementation.

The principles that guided the new SAGE approach[2] were the importance of

- Traditional and nontraditional partners in public sector and civil society organizations in changing the demand and supply of girls' education
- Programs and solutions designed to reflect local realities
- Multimethod approaches in implementing locally designed solutions
- Local resource development, human, financial, and physical
- Capacity strengthening for new and expanded roles of public and civil society institutions
- Stakeholders democratically engaged to support the civil, social and economic opportunities of girls

Understanding these expectations helps in drawing inferences about SAGE country program lessons and how they may have shaped or been shaped by these assumptions and principles.

## SAGE project framework and organization

The SAGE project framework builds on the assumptions and principles above by seeking to

- Strengthen public and private sector institutions to promote girls' education
- Improve the knowledge base on girls' education in order to better implement related policies, strategies, and programs
- Mobilize national and local leadership to promote girls' education
- Broaden and support local community participation

The SAGE activity applied this framework at national and local levels by building on the experiences of girls' education initiatives worldwide. To inform its activities, SAGE conducted studies and published reports on education quality and best practices in promoting girls' education. It organized national and international workshops to bring together policymakers, practitioners, scholars, and girls' education advocates to share experiences and disseminate knowledge and strategies for advancing girls' education. It convened national conferences to mobilize groups on behalf of girls' education, and it conducted capacity-building activities for national and local groups to enable them to address relevant girls' issue ◆ In the long term, these activities were assumed to lead to improved rates of girls' completion of primary school in the project areas of participating countries.

The main goal of SAGE was to build a conducive and sustainable environment for ◆ advancing girls' education in countries of participating USAID Missions. Once a country expressed interest, SAGE helped it design an appropriate multisectoral program. This normally involved a consultative period, and the drawing up of an action plan and program of technical support. The plans were approved by USAID, a SAGE office was opened, and a local country coordinator and deputy coordinators or program assistants were hired. The country coordinator received administrative backup from the central SAGE office and could call for specialized

[2] See H. Williams (2001) for greater clarification of these points.

technical assistance as needed. The effectiveness of the country programs rested to considerable extent upon the creative leadership qualities of the country coordinators and their staff.

## SAGE activities

The SAGE Project was established in March 1999 with start-up activities in that year in Guinea and Mali and the convening of three centrally-organized gatherings: The Girls' Education Skills Workshop, A Seminar on the Importance of Fundraising for Girls' Education, and The Forum for Girls' Education. Year 1 (March through December) also saw the establishment of a research agenda that culminated in several studies by the end of the project.

The programs in Guinea and Mali continued to be a priority in Year 2 (2000). In addition three research studies documented 1) the advantages nontraditional sectoral partners can bring to girls' education, 2) specific examples of how multisectoral partnerships have contributed to girls' retention in primary school, and 3) two case studies (Guinea and Morocco) to show how the WID conceptual model and principles were implemented in two settings. Two conferences were also held in coordination with the EGAT/WID Office on issues critical to girls' education: the Symposium on Girls' Education: Evidence, Issues, and Actions and the Colloquium on Girls' Education: A Key Intervention Against HIV/AIDS and its Effects.

SAGE expanded the programs in Guinea and Mali in Year 3 (2001) and started new programs in the Congo, Ghana and El Salvador. Activities continued in all countries in the final year (2002) with a special emphasis on ensuring sustainability of ongoing programs and preparing for the Lessons-Learned conference in May 2002.

# 4. Country cases

The following section provides summaries of SAGE activities in the five participating countries ordered in terms of their longevity in the program: Guinea, Mali, Ghana, El Salvador, and the Congo. Five program elements are considered for each country: 1) the country context and project rationale for SAGE's approach, 2) the multisectoral partners engaged, 3) SAGE activities, 4) results, and 5) the likelihood of sustaining activities when SAGE ends. The intent of this section is to provide data on the implementation of a multisectoral approach under varying conditions and in varying time frames in order to inform the discussion about lessons learned that follows.

## Guinea[3]

### Context and rationale for SAGE's approach in Guinea

In the last 10 years the government has worked hard with NGOs and communities to build more schools and classrooms nearer to children's homes in rural areas. As part of these efforts the Ministry of Education formed an Equity Committee with support from USAID. This committee led a campaign to address the educational needs of less well-served groups including girls. As a result, the percentage of enrolled girls rose significantly while boys' enrollments also increased. Despite these efforts, enrollment and achievement levels of rural girls continued to lag behind boys, and girls dropped out at higher rates.

**Guinea Indicators**

| | |
|---|---|
| Population | 7.6 million |
| Life expectancy | 46 years |
| GDP per capita | US$1,300 |

(Source: CIA World Factbook, 2001)

| | |
|---|---|
| Gender gap score[4] | 21 |
| Increase 1985–95 | 3 |

Gross enrollment (%)

| | 1985 | | 1995 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F |
| Primary | 47 | 22 | 63 | 34 |
| Secondary | 18 | 7 | 18 | 6 |

(Source: Population Action International 1998)

SAGE began work in Guinea in 1999. It based its strategy on the assumption that government institutional and financial resources were not sufficient to increase school participation significantly, and that there were other sources of support in the larger society that could be mobilized to expand resources and bring influence to bear on issues of girls' participation. SAGE focused on building the capacities of national and local institutions to address these issues.

### SAGE partnerships in Guinea

SAGE initially subcontracted Plan International to follow on with work it was doing with the Equity Committee in the first phase of the GWEA project. In that phase Plan had worked to mobilize stakeholders around the importance of girls' education. With SAGE it expanded partnerships with national and local organizations and established links between them. The national groups included the media, religious leaders, women's organizations, international PVO/NGOs, and donors. Local groups included community and religious leaders, women's groups, business owners, and parents. Important sources of support were associations of successful urbanites and emigrants who mobilized resources and other forms of support for their villages of origin.

### SAGE activities in Guinea

At the national level SAGE works with the National Alliance for Girls' Education. This organization, composed of 180 members broadly representing stakeholders in the private sector, meets regularly to initiate actions on behalf of girls' education. In September 1999, SAGE convened a National Forum of public and private sector groups including civil society organizations to raise the awareness of leaders about girls' issues and the constraints that limited their educational participation. The National Alliance formed an Executive Committee of 15 members that works actively on its behalf: coordinating its initiatives, serving as a contact point with the government, and supporting monitoring activities. The Alliance was instrumental in organizing 140 communities across 18 districts to identify and address local

[3] For more complete details about SAGE/Guinea see H. Williams (2001).

[4] The "gender gap score" is the average difference between GERs for boys and girls at the primary and secondary levels.

constraints on girls' education. It works as an umbrella organization to link the local alliances with each other and with national and regional organizations from media, business, and government sectors that support them on a continuing basis. Members of the Alliance include Muslim and Catholic religious leaders who have been actively involved in public awareness campaigns to promote girls' education, thus dispelling misinterpretations of religious teachings that prevent girls in some areas from attending school.

The National Alliance also has a constituent Media Task Force with the agenda to communicate messages about girls' education. These advocacy messages are broadcast and/or published by national and regional media partners. This Media Task Force, comprised of 12 Alliance members, coordinates the national media campaign and volunteers time to help local alliances document their activities and results. SAGE worked with the Media Task Force to design and implement a media campaign. In June 2001 print, radio, and television media covered festivities held for Girls' Education Day in 23 regions of the country. Stakeholder groups prepared messages and programs on local solutions to girls' educational constraints that were broadcast on local radio reaching five target prefectures. SAGE support for local planning and advocacy through the SAGE various activities, including media campaigns, resulted in girls' enrollment in one project area, in Kabak, rising from 47 in 1998 to 527 in 2001.

Besides assisting in the creation of the National Alliance and the National Media Task Force, SAGE supported feasibility studies for and subsequently helped establish FONSEF, the girls' education fundraising network. FONSEF obtained the status of an NGO by April 2001 and raised in one year over $12,500 to fund girls' initiatives. One activity provided 400 school uniforms (made by local tailors' groups) as an incentive for girls in the 19 local alliances established by the project. FONSEF with SAGE support held a General Assembly in 2002 to review its first year accomplishments.

At the local level SAGE forged partnerships in communities with the lowest girls' education indicators by conducting focus group meetings with local stakeholders to raise consciousness and collect data on local constraints. These consultations led to the decision to provide strategic support for the 19 newly formed local alliances. Local alliances are composed of elected representatives and key community, school, business and religious leaders working to increase the participation of girls. These leaders act as community representatives to the National Alliance and the Girls' Education Working Group. The local alliances identified strategies and formulated action plans to support girls' education. SAGE enlisted educational promoters and community trainers to take the lead in reforms. Each alliance is located in an area where a SAGE partner (World Education, Save the Children, Plan, or the Equity Committee) is able to offer support. SAGE selected six pilot communities to receive more intensive help. The others take part in SAGE-supported general activities that include National Girls' Education Day, the School-Year Opening Ceremony that focuses on girls, and meetings to share ideas for improving girls' education. This two-tiered approach makes it possible to determine what results can be expected from different levels of effort. Recently SAGE identified three local partner organizations that will provide technical assistance to four pilot local alliances.



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To support the commitments of these national and local groups, SAGE conducted a number of capacity-building activities including training in the preparation of action plans for low-cost solutions to the constraints on girls' education and preparation of a monitoring and evaluation system to track results. SAGE also facilitated exchange visits among various local alliances to share information on successful interventions. The action plans identified roles and responsibilities of key actors and sectors within the community to implement activities on behalf of girls. SAGE provided assistance to these interventions.

SAGE also mobilized and trained 80 local and national religious leaders to promote girls' education through fundraising, sermons, and counseling parents in their communities. To improve the school environment for girls, SAGE provided training in gender equity, support for girls' mentoring clubs, and assisted in organizing the special days mentioned above to celebrate girls' education. SAGE also provided technical help in developing a female role model calendar for schools while a local faculty of education developed guidelines for teachers to use the calendars as supplemental teaching aids to illustrate the role model concept and the importance of schooling for girls and boys to lead productive roles as adults.

## Results of SAGE activities in Guinea

Activities initiated by the Guinea government increased enrollments of children substantially between 1990 and 1999 (see table, p. 17), since Jomtien. The trend continued under SAGE. By 2001 the overall primary gross enrollment rate was 61 percent and 50 percent for girls.

SAGE support for training and planning in six (later seven) pilot alliances led to such activities as national day festivities to commemorate girls' education, radio broadcasts, consultations with religious leaders, and actions to address other specific constraints to girls' education. Two alliances opened junior secondary facilities so girls could continue their studies. In other cases SAGE involvement resulted in the construction of schools, classrooms and latrines, the hiring of more local teachers, the repair of school roads, and a better image of women through the role model calendar.

**Guinea: Major partners and main activities**

**SAGE Partners**

- The Ministry of Education: Equity Committee
- The Ministry of Social Affairs
- National and local religious leaders
- National Media Task Force
- La Radio Rurale de Guinée
- Local print and radio broadcasting media
- Local alliances from 19 sub-prefects
- Local NGOs: ARAF (The Association for Research and Literacy Training), ASED, (Association for Disenfranchised Children), Cabinet PIC (Center for Performance Improvement), FEG, (The Federation of Guinean Teachers), and FAWE, (Forum for African Women Educationalists)
- PVOs: EDC, Peace Corps, Plan International and World Education
- Local business operators
- The Chamber of Commerce
- FONSEF (National Fund for Girls' Education)



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**SAGE Activities**

- Built partnerships at the national and community levels
- Convened a National Forum on Girls' Education with participants from civil society, public and private sectors, donors, religious leaders, and the press
- Assisted the creation of three entities: the National Alliance, a National Media Task Force, and Girls' Education Fundraising Network (FONSEF)
- Provided these national groups with technical assistance in management, fundraising, and message dissemination
- Provided technical assistance to 19 local alliances (with direct assistance to six); these are bodies of 20 to 60 people (local community and religious leaders, small business operators) that assist local schools
- Provided seven local alliances with technical assistance and training in fundraising and action planning
- Trained religious and media leaders in girls' education issues
- Developed guidelines for the creation of girls' mentoring clubs
- Identified urban and rural female role models, produced role model calendars, and distributed them country wide; developed training module on their use in schools and community, and trained teachers, school directors, inspectors, religious leaders, and community members
- Mobilized NGOs, PVOs, CBOs in support of girls' education
- Organized National Girls' Education Day for three consecutive years, launching junior secondary school in Lelouma, and other public events, involving important leaders and others to reinforce messages about girls' education
- Selected and prepared NGOs to carry on capacity building activities
- Enlisted three local partners to provide capacity building to four pilot local alliances

The work of the Lelouma Alliance illustrates some of the many initiatives that were organized. It raised in-kind and monetary resources to build a local junior high school, latrines for girls, housing for two teachers, and arranged for school supplies to be sold at reduced prices. The number of girls enrolled in the eight schools monitored by the local alliance grew from 746 in 1998 to 878 in 2001. The following show the achievements of other local alliances assisted by SAGE in 2000–2001.

**Kaback**

- Built a 3-classroom school
- Girls' enrollment increased from 47 in 1998 to over 500 in 2001
- Celebrated Girls' Education Day with more than 500 people attending

**Brouwal Sounki**

- Constructed additional classroom
- Organized community to contract teachers
- Girls enrollment in school increased from 156 in 1998 to 609 in 2002

**Dougountouny**

- The local alliance recruited 412 new students of which 206 were girls
- Completed a new school building with school furniture
- Girls' enrollment in school increased from 193 in 1998 to 549 in 2002

**Dialakoro**

- Repaired school furnishings
- Sensitized school staff to reduce girls' chores (or share them equally between sexes) and combat early marriages
- Convinced community to retain married girls at school

**Guendembou**

- Sensitized school staff to reduce girls' chores
- Adoption of sanctions against early pregnancy (fine of up to $300 plus legal action against teachers)
- Girls enrollment increased from 660 in 1999 to 1,292 in 2001

### Efforts to ensure sustainability in Guinea after SAGE

SAGE's efforts will continue as a result of relationships forged during the project with the National Alliance, NGOs, the Peace Corps, and local alliances. A document on recommendations for a national strategy, as well as training modules, action plans, and monitoring and advocacy tools that will continue to be used in future initiatives, were produced based on SAGE activities. In Guinea the now well-established and developed institutional networks addressing girls' issues will continue to operate with further capacity-building support as needed from NGOs/PVOs and Peace Corps. Plans are underway to expand activities to 16 new prefectures, create 650 new PTAs, 35 new local alliances, and develop a national policy on community participation in support of girls' education.

## Mali

### Context and rationale for SAGE's approach in Mali

Mali is extremely poor, and consequently the provision of schooling facilities in rural areas remains a political and social challenge to the government. With support from USAID, several PVOs (Africare, Save the Children/US, World Education) and local NGOs that work with them have mobilized thousands of rural villages to assist in establishing their own schools. Parents however were reported to be reluctant to send their children to school, especially girls, because they did not feel the education program was relevant to their lives and needs. Therefore SAGE took as its entry point the development of gender-sensitive life skills materials for the primary grades. This choice was in line with the established priorities of the Ministry of Education and USAID/Mali. The other major need was to make community members aware of the importance of girls' education and to encourage removal of the barriers that prevented them from participating fully.

**Mali indicators**

| | |
|---|---|
| Population | 11 million |
| Life expectancy | 47 years |
| GDP per capita | $850 |

(Source: CIA World Factbook, 2001)

| | |
|---|---|
| Gender gap score | 10 |
| Increase 1985–95 | 1 |

Gross enrollment (%)

| | 1985 | | 1995 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F |
| Primary | 29 | 17 | 41 | 27 |
| Secondary | 9 | 4 | 11 | 6 |

(Source: Population Action International 1998)

### SAGE partnerships in Mali

SAGE's main partners in Mali, the PVOs mentioned above, have ongoing community school programs. In addition SAGE works with numerous other local and regional NGOs and CBOs affiliated with the community school programs (see box for a list). SAGE also enlisted television and print media such as the national television authority (Office du Radiodiffusion et Télévision du Mali), private radio (in Bamakan and Benkan), and private print media (*Journal Le Soir de Bamako* and *Journal Le Republicain*).

## SAGE activities in Mali

Since 1999, SAGE conducted seven major activities in Mali to improve girls' education. The first major activity was organized with the help of the Girls' Education Unit in the Ministry of Education. SAGE consultants with NGO fieldworkers visited rural communities to identify topics for life skills materials. Then a workshop was conducted for the PVO/NGO fieldworkers and members of various departments in the MOE who, working from authoritative resources, wrote reading passages with life skills content for upper primary children. The passages are set in a village similar to those in Mali. The characters include a girl heroine who is good at her schoolwork and is able, from what she has learned, to solve the various health, environment, safety, nutrition, and other problems that her family and neighbors face. The final program consisted of 98 life skills reading passages with teacher guides and a set of 25 posters. The program was tested in 100 community schools, and later a training guide for active methodologies was developed to help teachers introduce these materials. Overall 45 trainers and 169 community and public school teachers were trained in the life skills materials. The materials were intended to make the benefits of educating children, especially girls, clearer to parents.

Second, 258 teachers received training on gender equity and girl-friendly classroom practices from SAGE. The preliminary results of classroom observation undertaken in March 2002 by external monitors in 29 community and public schools are encouraging. Ninety percent of teachers observed made no distinction between girls and boys when assigning school maintenance tasks. Similarly 72 percent of teachers called equally upon both girls and boys during question and answer sessions. Incidents of harsh behavior of teachers towards girls were rare. The improved environment in classrooms also benefits boys.

Third, SAGE provided leadership training for female members of the PTAs so they would take a more active decisionmaking role. Their training also equipped them with the knowledge and skills to support girls' education. Thirty trainers from PVOs and NGOs and 92 PTA members were trained in leadership skills. A further 352 PTA members were mobilized in support of this training.

Fourth, SAGE organized a Planning-for-Action Seminar to foster action in support of gender equity among school and community level actors. One hundred and thirty trainers were trained in action planning. One community, for example, built separate latrines for girls as a result of this training.

Fifth, SAGE trained PTA and other community members in six pilot communities to organize and initiate mentoring activities for schoolgirls. Two communities have held regular weekly remedial courses for girls. One community found this activity so beneficial that it organized similar sessions for boys.

Finally, SAGE mobilized 20 volunteers from different sectors to implement fundraising activities in support of girls' education, and then was instrumental in working with this group to organize fundraising events such as gala concerts and dinners attended by prominent public and private figures in Malian society. In addition to fundraising, the galas became a platform to highlight the importance of girls' education and the benefits resulting from increasing girls' attendance, retention and completion of primary education.



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**Mali: Major partners and main activities**

**SAGE Partners**

- Ministry of Education: Girls' Education Unit, Regional Education Directorate of the District of Bamako
- Ministry of Health
- Africare, Save the Children/US, World Education
- AMPJ: Malian Association for the Promotion of Youth
- ASG: Subaahi Gumo Association
- GRADE-Banlieue: Group for Action Research and Development
- AADEC: Association in Support of Community Directed Development
- OMAES: Malian Initiative to Assist the Children of the Sahel
- AMADECOM: Malian Association for Community Development
- AMAPROS: Malian association for the Promotion of the Sahel
- GADS: Malian Group for the Development of the Sahel
- CRADE: Action Research Group for Endogenous Development
- PADI: Partners for Integrated Development
- PTAs of six pilot communities
- Media: ORTM: Office du Radiodiffusion et Television du Mali
- Private Radio (Bamakan, Ben'kan)
- Private print media: *Journal Le Soir de Bamako, Journal Le Republicain*

**SAGE Activities**

- Developed life skills curriculum materials: teachers' guide, posters, and reading materials for students, teachers' guide of active methodologies for introducing life skills materials
- Produced PTA leadership training guide for active participation of girls in basic education in French and Bamanan
- Developed girl-friendly classroom practices guides for trainers and teachers
- Prepared a community action-planning guide in French and Bamanan
- Developed a girls' mentoring guide
- Trained 45 trainers and 169 teachers in life skills materials
- Trained 30 trainers and 92 PTA members in leadership skills and mobilized 12 chiefs to support training
- Trained 54 trainers and 258 teachers in girl-friendly practices
- Trained 130 trainers in community action planning
- Mobilized 20 volunteers from different sectors to implement fund raising activities in support of communities

## Results of SAGE activities in Mali

SAGE/Mali activities brought greater awareness of girls' issues to organizations already working in community education and stimulated more effort on the part of communities to address these issues. Local women became more active participants in school management committees and PTAs and assumed a more active role in community decisionmaking. Some of the pilot communities decided to prohibit female genital mutilation and one banned early marriage. Communities have drawn up action plans and are implementing such activities as building latrines, establishing mentoring groups, building wells, and providing classroom equipment. Teachers are showing more gender balance in classroom practices. Life skills materials that were intended as supplementary materials for classes will eventually become a core part of the curriculum and therefore Malian children in the entire public system will study more relevant subjects. There has been high


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interest from the Ministry of Education to expand the use of SAGE training modules to nonpilot areas.

The above summarizes the outcomes resulting from activities directly undertaken by the SAGE/Mali team. The strong partnerships forged with PVOs/NGOs also produced results, and these are expected to grow given the commitment of these organizations to continue utilizing the tools developed by SAGE.

### Efforts to ensure sustainability in Mali after SAGE

SAGE has worked closely with PVOs and local NGOs whose work will be continuing. To encourage sustainability of training interventions, SAGE has trained trainers and produced training modules and guides including guides for training PTA leadership in supporting girls' education (in French and Bamanan); girl-friendly classroom practices; community action planning (in French and Bamanan); and a girls' mentoring guide.

The life skills materials will be incorporated into the main Malian curriculum, the upper grades of primary, during its reform, and therefore relevant content will become a permanent aspect of school programs.

## Ghana

### Context and rationale for SAGE's approach in Ghana

Originally a fairly prosperous country, Ghana suffered an economic downturn in the 1970s that caused deteriorating conditions in the education sector. In 1986 reforms were instituted that shifted more of the education funds away from the tertiary to the 9-year basic education program. While overall enrollment rates have increased, girls still suffer a significant gender gap that was not projected to narrow significantly in the recent past. Girls' enrollments make up half of total enrollments in greater urban areas like Accra but constitute much lower rates in rural areas and particularly in some of the remoter regions of the country. Similar statistics are reported for discrepancies in achievement scores between rural and urban areas. The gender gap is greater in these under-served areas.

Ghana Indicators

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Population | 19.8 million | |
| Life expectancy | 57 years | |
| GDP per capita | $1,900 | |

(Source: CIA World Factbook, 2001)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Gender gap score | 15 | |
| Decrease 1985–95 | 2 | ✔ |

Gross Enrollment (%)

| | 1985 | | 1999 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F |
| Primary | 85 | 66 | 84 | 74 |
| Secondary | 49 | 30 | – | – |

(Sources: Population Action International 1998; World Bank Country at a Glance, 2001)

With the advent of the education reform initiative fCUBE (free, compulsory, universal, basic education), girls' education became a priority of the Ghanaian government. A Minister of State for Basic, Secondary and Girl-Child Education was appointed, and the Ghana Education Service (GES) formed a Girls' Education Unit (GEU) to oversee the activities focused on promoting girls' education. The government's commitment to girls' education through the GEU and its institutional structure of more than 250 girls' education field officers at the national, regional and district offices made this unit the logical partner for SAGE activities. The GEU at the time was already building partnerships with UN organizations, international PVOs, local NGOs and others to address common interests in education, many of which were at the local level and affected girls. The SAGE strategy was built on the realization that an already rich terrain existed for education initiatives and that through the GEU it would be possible to leverage the efforts of many of these groups and refocus them more intentionally on girls' education.

## SAGE partnerships in Ghana

SAGE's main partners in Ghana included public sector entities of the Ministry of Education: Ghana Education Services (GES), Girls' Education Unit (GEU), District Girls' Education Officers (DGEOs), and Regional Girls' Education Officers (RGEOs) and Science, Math, Technology Education Coordinators (SMTECs), and civil society organizations and leaders located in communities (School Management Committees [SMCs], PTAs, community leaders, women's organizations, religious leaders, and local NGOs). In addition there were partners already engaged in improving school programs and mobilizing local support, including Ghana Quality Improvement for Primary Schools (QUIPS), Community School Alliances (CSA), Education Development Center (EDC) Ghana Offices, UNICEF and the World University Service of Canada (WUSC). SAGE also formed relationships with local radio and print media.

**Ghana: Major partners and main activities**

**SAGE Partners**

- Ministry of Education: GES, GEU, DGEOs, RGEOs, SMTECs, Women in Development Technical Officers (WITED)
- SMCs of 35 pilot communities
- PVOs: QUIPS/AED Ghana Office, CSA/EDC Ghana Office, U.S. Peace Corps, WUSC
- Local radio and print media
- UNICOM, Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)

**SAGE Activities**

- Assisted the GES/GEU in developing a vision and strategy
- Strengthened planning capacity in the GEU
- Supported production of a DGEO/RGEO Handbook (with WUSC)
- Trained RGEOs, DGEOs, supervisors, facilitators in seven SAGE districts
- Reviewed six training manuals to ensure they are gender-sensitive/girl-friendly
- Reviewed Manual for Instructional Leadership/Management Skills for gender-sensitivity and girl-friendliness
- Increased number of women in 35 SMCs where SAGE works
- Adapted CSA tool to make it gender-sensitive and girl-friendly
- Leveraged CSA radio programs to ensure gender-sensitive/girl-friendly messages

## SAGE activities in Ghana

SAGE activities were launched in June 2001 and thus Ghana had had roughly one year of involvement at the time of this writing. SAGE/Ghana planned to implement interventions at three levels: the system, the school and the community. There were four main activities. The first priority was to work with the GEU and its field officers to mobilize multiple sectors on behalf of girls' education. Initially SAGE assisted the GES/GEU in preparing a document that projected a vision and strategy for girls' education and then translating it into yearly plans and job descriptions that aligned with GEU priorities. SAGE also worked with the GEU to develop a matrix of all the existing activities involved with girls' education, a mechanism to monitor their activities, and tools, indicators, and procedures for tracking the progress of GEU activities. The GEU formed special committees to deal with girls' issues.

In the second major system-wide activity, SAGE provided technical assistance to a workshop for field officers to prepare a DGEO/RGEO Handbook based on their



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combined experiences in mobilizing support for girls' education. The Handbook was seen as a tool to facilitate and make the work of field officers more effective. The developers tested the Handbook with their colleagues and prepared a training guide for its use. SAGE supported training in the use of the Handbook for RGEOs, DGEOs, supervisors, and facilitators in seven SAGE districts and increased their skills in community mobilization techniques.

The third activity was a school-level intervention where SAGE reviewed a number of existing tools for gender sensitivity. SAGE and QUIPS staff revised six teacher-training manuals that were developed by the QUIPS project and a manual for instructional leadership/management skills for headteachers and supervisors.

The fourth activity involved communities. GES identified for SAGE interventions 35 communities needing help in mobilizing support for girls' education. SAGE provided community mobilizers who spent several days in each village conducting focus group meetings and working with SMCs, PTAs and community leaders to identify the constraints on girls' participation and develop action plans to address them. The mobilizers used the CSA Community Participation Inventory Tool (CPIT) and PRA/PLA tools that had been modified by SAGE to make them more gender sensitive and focused. SAGE also increased the number of women members in the 35 SMCs where it worked and provided them with leadership training. Among the activities undertaken by these communities were girls' clubs, special latrines for girls, more equitable distribution of household tasks, and early curfews for children on school nights. DGEOs also worked with teachers to increase girls' enrollments and help students with their academic work to reduce failures and the need for retests.

Finally, SAGE leveraged the QUIPS/CSA radio programs (in the local language) to ensure more gender-sensitive and girl-friendly messages. These programs broadcast interviews with influential personalities talking about the importance of girls' education and reported on innovative community activities that promoted the greater participation of girls. Radio programs, which were broadcast twice a month, also aired interviews with women professionals (role models) and schoolgirls.

## Results of SAGE activities in Ghana

As a result of SAGE activities, there was more awareness of girls' issues among the public, education officers, communities, and school staff, and 35 communities were actively involved in promoting girls' education. Two hundred and four teachers were sensitized to support girls' education, and training tools were developed that helped to make the efforts of girls' education officers and others more effective. In addition, the SAGE communities were implementing the interventions in their plans of action to increase the participation of girls.

## Efforts to ensure sustainability in Ghana after SAGE

The intimate involvement of the GEU in most of SAGE activities leaves an institutional structure to support the continuation of SAGE activities that are beneficial to girls' education. The full involvement of R/DGEOs in SAGE activities of action planning and training at the grassroots level has created a better skilled cadre of officers to continue the work started by SAGE.

# El Salvador

## Context and rationale for SAGE's approach in El Salvador

Although statistics show no apparent gender gap in the educational participation between boys and girls in El Salvador,[5] girls consistently achieve more poorly on academic tests, and it is generally believed that gender biases affect aspects of the health, education, safety, and employment of girls. In 2000 El Salvador participated in the World Conference on Girls' Education in Washington, DC. Through these meetings, the government became aware of the need to address the consistently poorer performance of girls and narrow the gap as quickly as possible. Because time was short for El Salvador's participation in SAGE, it was necessary to move quickly to begin the process of mobilizing widespread support for girls' issues on the national level. Consequently the SAGE strategy was three-fold: to strengthen broad public- and private-sector efforts to promote girls' education, to improve the knowledge base for implementing policies, strategies, and programs, and to mobilize leadership to promote girls' education. Community mobilization efforts are just now beginning and will continue after the end of the SAGE project. These activities will be directed at making classrooms more girl friendly and attractive through gender-sensitivity training for teachers.

**El Salvador Indicators**

| | |
|---|---|
| Population | 6.2 million |
| Life expectancy | 70 years |
| GDP per capita | $4,000 |

(Source: CIA World Factbook, 2001)

| | |
|---|---|
| Gender gap score | –3 |
| Decrease 1985–95 | 5 |

Gross Enrollment (%)

| | 1985 | | 1995 | | 1999 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | M | F | M | F | M | F |
| Primary | 74 | 74 | 88 | 89 | 98 | 96 |
| Secondary | 26 | 23 | 30 | 34 | 35 | 39 |

(Source: Population Action International 1998)

## SAGE partnerships in El Salvador

El Salvador has in a very short time been able to gain the support of highly placed individuals and groups to promote its agenda. Foremost among these is the country's first lady who, as an educator herself, has been very interested in promoting the education of all children, especially girls. She has attended events with full media coverage, has spoken out on girls' education issues, and has held meetings to convene private and government sector individuals to support the efforts of girls' education. In addition, El Salvador has had the support of high government officials in the Ministry of Education, donor nations, and the editor of El Salvador's largest daily newspaper, *La Prensa Gráfica*, a former Secretary of Education. Another important media group is Samix, which collaborated in a broadcasting campaign. All of these media contributions were provided free. SAGE also established partnerships with businesses (such as Pollo Campero, one of the largest fried chicken restaurant chains in Central America) and NGOs (such as Alfa Center and FUSADES) and many more (see box for more of the contributing partners).

## SAGE activities in El Salvador

SAGE/El Salvador quickly formed a Technical Committee composed of representatives of the National Family Secretariat, the Ministry of Education, and USAID to meet weekly and coordinate activities. The committee greatly expedited activities because of the key decisionmakers represented in its membership and the frequent meetings.

Media campaigns have been an important part of the SAGE/El Salvador initiative, supported by many groups from the media but spearheaded especially by the editor mentioned above. She organized a two-page spread published monthly in *La Prensa*

[5] At the primary level there is no consistent gap that favors either sex. At secondary level, however, a small gap that favored boys in 1985 has reversed and now favors girls in 1995 and 1999.

*Gráfica,* which highlights Salvadoran girl role models who have overcome difficulties to excel in academia, sports, and science. The SAMIX media group also uses public personalities to reach Salvadorans with messages about the importance of girls' education. Altogether the in-kind contributions by the media to this effort have been roughly $342,000. Other businesses have provided free promotion for girls' education on placemats in restaurants, on rice and bean bags that are used by every household, and with a picture on textbook covers showing how education opens doors to girls.

One media contact, Francisco Quezada, donated his time to develop a video, *The Future is Now,* which graphically presents the problems Salvadoran girls face with education. The video is shown to a variety of audiences and for a variety of purposes, from consciousness-raising to solicitation for support from the business community.

A creative initiative supported by SAGE was the choice of a girl as an icon to represent the needs of girls. When her family could not support her in private institutions she continued to do well in public institutions, even when her family lost their belongings in the earthquakes that struck in 2001. Her story appeared in one of the monthly newspaper pages on girls' education.

**El Salvador: SAGE Partners and Activities**

**SAGE Partners**

- Local Business: Pollo Campero, Arrocera San Francisco, Publinsa
- *La Prensa Gráfica*: Palomitas de Papel
- Local Radio and Television Broadcast: Channels 2, 4 and 6 (Salvadoran Telecorporation), Channel 8 (Catholic Channel), Channel 10 (National Educational Channel), Channel 33, Grupo SAMIX (12 radio stations)
- National Secretariat of the Family (SNF)
- Ministry of Education: Educational Counselors (*Asesores Pedagógicos*) and Juvenile Volunteers Brigade *(Brigadas Juveniles Voluntarios)*
- Salvadoran Institute for Women's Development (ISDEMU)
- Editorial Santillana, Herco and Progresa (prizes for *La Prensa Gráfica* contest)
- Educational Services Editorial (ESE)
- UNICEF

**SAGE Activities**

- Conducted national-level consciousness-raising and mobilization activities: roundtables for media, religious organizations and leaders, businesses, and NGOs
- Developed a videotape on the status of girls' education in El Salvador and the importance of addressing the gender issues within the present educational system
- Negotiated with *La Prensa Gráfica* the publication of two-page spread on girls' education, twice a month, for six months
- Negotiated with several radio and television stations spots, and programs in support of girls' access, retention, and achievement in school
- Assisted the Ministry of Education in making materials, textbooks, training, and classroom management more girl friendly
- Gave awareness workshops for parents, rural community leaders, and local government

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To increase the tools and knowledge base for girls' education in El Salvador, SAGE has compiled a bibliography on girls' education, published a SAGE bulletin, and developed a training curriculum for pedagogical advisors. They also plan to publicize analyses of education data showing deficiencies in girls' education, the aim being to change the minds of those who think no problems exist.

One of the important elements in the SAGE/El Salvador approach that allowed the project to make so much headway in so little time has been the respect SAGE staff has shown for the traditions of Salvadoran culture. Many communities and institutions are traditional and conservative and could easily have become antagonized and obstructionist if a radical approach had been used. SAGE sent a letter to the leaders in various sectors of civil society to inform them of the importance of girls' education and to ask for their cooperation with the project.

### Results of SAGE activities in El Salvador

SAGE/El Salvador has raised the consciousness of many in the country about girls' education issues, and has placed the subject on the national agenda as a priority issue. It has mobilized members of the communication media and private enterprises to sponsor actions to promote girls' education. Many initiatives have become part of ongoing institutional programs. SAGE has also established the fact that girls' education is needed for development and does not threaten the cultural underpinnings of society. Quantitative results cannot as yet be measured in terms of girls' attainment, but these SAGE accomplishments are important efforts to establish an environment where girls are more likely to improve their performance.

### Efforts to ensure sustainability in El Salvador after SAGE

Planned next steps include a survey and a pilot mobilization in two communities, the training of volunteers from the Juvenile Volunteers Brigade, and the mobilization of 20 communities. The Juvenile Volunteers Brigade is a corps of boys and girls who volunteer to work in the community. The Brigade is organized by the Ministry of Education. In addition, pedagogical advisors will be given gender-sensitivity training. The groundwork has been established for these activities and the first stage of implementation began in May 2002. It is anticipated that the leadership and coordination for activities that follow on from SAGE will be lodged in the National Secretariat of the Family where some of those most involved in SAGE have been active.

## The Democratic Republic of Congo

### Context and rationale for SAGE's approach in the Congo

The Congo has had a large gender gap dating back from before 1985, and although it is narrowing there were still eight percentage points difference in gross enrollment rates by 1999.

The SAGE office was established in October 2001 with pilot activities only starting in December, thus making this the "youngest" of the five SAGE countries with only about five months of active implementation. Another obstacle was that the government sector could not be involved at the official level because of the Brooke Amendment to the U.S. Foreign Assistance Appropriation Act, which prohibits U.S. assistance to countries in arrears on their debt, and further restricted participation with government institutions.[6] Nevertheless, SAGE activities in the Congo serve as an illustration of how quickly a multisectoral approach involving the private and religious sectors can be mounted, even when time is limited and political barriers exist.

[6] Section 575 of the 1999 appropriations bill, known as the Faircloth amendment, states that no funds can be provided to the central government of Congo until the President reports to Congress that the central government is: 1) investigating and prosecuting those responsible for human rights abuses in Congo and 2) implementing a credible democratic transition.



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**Congo Indicators**

| | |
|---|---|
| Population | 53.6 million |
| Life expectancy | 49 years |
| GDP per capita | $600 |

(Source: CIA World Factbook, 2001)

| | |
|---|---|
| Gender gap score | 20 |
| Decrease 1985–95 | 8 |

Gross Enrollment (%)

| | 1985 | | 1995 | | 1999 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Primary | 105 | 68 | 86 | 59 | 82 | 74 |
| Secondary | 32 | 13 | 32 | 19 | – | – |

(Source: Population Action International 1998; World Bank Country-at-a-Glance, 2001)

The conflict and instability in the Congo in recent years has severely affected the education system. SAGE chose Lubumbashi (second largest city in the country) for pilot activities because of the special deterioration in its education situation due to unrest and conflict between 1990-1991 and 1997-1998 and the low participation of girls in Katanga Province (second only to Kasai). SAGE selected six schools for support through surveys of school staff, community members, and parents. Social and economic constraints were reported to be an important factor in girls' low participation rates; consequently, SAGE/Congo paid special attention to addressing these constraints. In addition SAGE focused on the religious sector because of the widespread feeling among youth and community members that it is the only permanent and stable entity upon which they can rely.

## SAGE partners in the Congo

SAGE has been working in six pilot communities to mobilize support for girls' education. It worked through PTAs, teachers, primary school directors, school inspectors, and pedagogical advisors. It also partnered with local media (Radio Television Evangelical Africa-RTEVA) and journalists and gained its greatest successes through involving important religious leaders and their congregations. In addition SAGE works with UNICEF on issues of girls' education using a multisectoral approach in six private schools in Lubumbashi.

**The Congo: SAGE Partners and Activities**

**SAGE Partners**

- UNICEF
- World Vision
- Katanga Provincial Department of Education
- PTAs of the six pilot communities
- Teachers, headmasters, inspectors, and pedagogical advisors of the six pilot schools
- Local print and television media: Radio Television Evangelical Africa-RTEVA, the Katanga Affiliate of the National Broadcasting Corporation (RTNC), InterViens et Vois Radio and Television, Echo of Hope newsletter of the Salvation Army
- Religious groups: Adventist Church, Evangelical Church, Pentecostal Church, Kimbanguiste Church, Salvation Army
- Katanga Provincial Chamber of Commerce

**SAGE Activities**

- Trained teachers and PTAs to make schools more girl friendly
- Sensitized communities to support girls' education through gender training, action planning workshops, and creating girls' clubs
- Developed income-generating activities to reduce the burden of school costs on parents
- Developed information exchange strategies through workshops, a forum on girls' education, media reports, and radio messages



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## SAGE activities in the Congo

Five main activities were undertaken by SAGE/Congo. The first involved teacher training to improve the school environment for girls. One hundred teachers and 16 inspectors were trained in girl-friendly classroom practices. As a result of books and supplies, teachers began to develop awareness of girls' needs, and the conditions for girls improved in classrooms.

The second activity consisted of awareness raising sessions with community members and parents. From this experience the participants became more supportive of girls' education. Forty school stakeholders and 840 community members are now aware of the importance of girls' education and of the strategies that can be pursued to support their participation. This was accomplished through gender-sensitivity, consensus-building, and action-planning workshops. Activities are continuing to improve the classroom environment and help girls excel in their studies.

Third, SAGE organized roundtable discussions with local businessmen to elicit ideas and support for income-generating activities. These activities were undertaken to reduce the burden of school costs to parents, thus making schooling possible for girls who might otherwise have been kept home. These activities also increased the resources available to schools.

Fourth, through the collaboration of SAGE/Congo with local television and radio, 10 programs have been televised and seven have been broadcast on subjects related to girls' education.

The fifth activity involved mobilizing 10 large religious communities to promote girls' education through sermons, poems, contests, publications, and other means. Four of the churches also raised funds to support girls having difficulty pursing their schooling. Twelve girls during their last semester of the school year were provided with all their school supplies and costs.

In addition, SAGE/Congo plans to provide training to the PTAs of the six pilot schools in order to reenergize them. A workshop for media and religious groups will also be organized in order to improve their capacity to undertake educational initiatives on girls' education.

## Results of SAGE activities in the Congo

SAGE/Congo in a short period raised the awareness of girls' issues among community members and members of the education staff in six pilot communities and was able to mobilize religious organizations to provide moral and financial support for girls' education. Three parent committees convened a seminar to discuss how they could reduce the barriers to girls' education, and parents took initiatives to ensure the school attendance of their daughters

## Efforts to ensure sustainability in the Congo after SAGE

Gender sensitivity training will continue to have an impact in the 96 classes of the pilot schools. These schools are planning to give prizes to students with high performance thereby encouraging girls to work to achieve higher performance. The revitalized PTAs will continue to function in the six communities. Religious institutions play an important role in local communities in the Congo and therefore by involving them there is greater likelihood that activities supporting girls will be sustained after SAGE ends.

# 5. Lessons learned from implementing the multisectoral approach in SAGE countries

## Introduction

SAGE project experience contributed considerably to knowledge about multisectoral approaches and their uses in addressing girls' education. This section summarizes five types of lessons learned that emerged from these country experiences: 1) the contributions of various sectors to girls' education; 2) the mobilization of multiple sectors; 3) conditions that increase the likelihood of success; 4) activities that promote girls' education; and 5) the outlines of a generic process for mobilizing sectors. Section 6 provides a more in-depth discussion of the multisectoral model as an approach to issues of girls' education.

**Characteristics of multisectoral approaches**

- Increase the range of issues addressed as the circle of partners expands
- Build a critical mass of support for girls' education with a momentum and commitment to change
- Link multiple sectors horizontally and vertically for more productive contributions to girls' education
- Create frontal, synergistic, simultaneous approaches to issues at different levels and through different interventions
- Assume all society has a responsibility, not just the ministry of education
- Model holistic approaches that are equally effective in addressing other issues, such as HIV, health, and environment
- Deepen the knowledge of the culture and the context in order to increase the effectiveness of the multisectoral approach

## Contributions of various sectors to girls' education

The partners that were engaged in SAGE countries included the private business sector, the media, the religious sector, PVOs/NGOs/CBOs, and the public government sector. In general these sectors are approached in order to advocate for or communicate information about girls' education, reinforce desirable norms, decrease religious misunderstandings, increase resources, and bring a broader range of talents to bear on issues of girls' education. To the extent that these activities are crucial to reform and that they are accomplished through these sectors is the extent to which multisectoral approaches add value to the results. Once representatives of the various sectors are activated in networks with objectives, roles, and routines that build on each sector's strengths, the efforts are more likely to be sustained than, for example, when a project conducts activities for a while, suspends its financial support, and goes away.

The multisectoral approach to girls' education brings multiple agents, methods, and solutions to bear on the constraints of girls' participation. The SAGE project's experience shows undeniably that participating sectors can be mobilized and provide important contributions even when they have little history of previous involvement in girls' education.

Below the rationales, contributions, and limitations of involving each of these sectors are described. The original model as noted above called for mobilizing only three nontraditional sectors, the business, media, and religious sectors. Under SAGE, two traditional sectors—the government and PVO/NGOs—were also targeted.

### The business sector

*Rationale.* In most developing countries—including participating SAGE countries—resources are not sufficient to provide schooling opportunities for all children, and therefore parents are increasingly asked to support more of the



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expenses of schooling through fees and other payments. Girls are known to suffer most when household income is not adequate to send all children to school. To support project initiatives that increase girls' participation requires that resources be raised from nontraditional sources. In most countries the private business sector is the only one able to afford these funds. The business sector also serves as a model for private sector practices that might enable the education sector to operate more efficiently in supplying schooling opportunities and/or expand the resources available to it.

*Business contributions to SAGE activities.* Historical distrust of government and public education often discourages support from the private sector. However SAGE was able to mobilize private contributions in most of its countries despite this reluctance. For example, Guinea received national and local support from business operators through FONSEF, a fund established specifically to support girls' education. Mali organized fundraising gala dinners. El Salvador received major in-kind contributions from a number of organizations, including the costs of girls' advocacy messages in newspapers, radio, and television. The Congo expanded resources through fundraising by religious groups and soliciting ideas from businessmen about how to develop income-generating activities for parents. Generally speaking, efforts to mobilize contributions from this sector seemed to work best when the business 1) saw it as in its own interest to contribute, 2) could contribute in-kind services or products as in free media support, 3) was widely recognized as contributing (e.g., in images and slogans on bean bags and restaurant place mats)[7]; and 4) believed the sponsoring organization was credible. It was also helpful when fundraising was officially recognized as a national priority and when professional marketing techniques were used.

*Limitations on the contributions of the business sector.* Unless mobilized in a permanent institutional network directed toward girls' education goals, businesses need frequent reminders and prodding to contribute to causes. Consequently mobilizers can expend considerable energy with fundraising activities, keeping accounts, and disbursing funds. Each business may need to be approached with an individualized appeal showing how support benefits its own interests. These resource costs to the project need to be assessed in relation to other potential uses for the same time and energies. SAGE did not explore the idea of tax breaks as a more efficient means of mobilizing resources, possibly because of the major policy changes it would require and the unstable tax structures that exist in some of these countries. Mali, however, is an example where voluntary taxes have been collected in selected communities specifically to raise revenues for local health and education services.

## The media sector

*Rationale:* In many countries girls' schooling participation is still constrained by social values about their roles and needs for education. Girls provide a significant source of household labor, and therefore parents may weigh the unclear benefits of education against the clear costs of lost labor. The problems of girls' education may differ between urban and rural areas and between ethnic and other groups within the society. Changes can only come about through widespread awareness of the importance of girls' education. The media is the only sector with the means to make these messages widely available to all relevant groups.

Researchers who study social behavior say that when it becomes desirable to reverse general social norms, the change is most rapidly accomplished by "infecting" small

[7]In the Congo, however, this was perceived as a disincentive for businesses to contribute. Businesses in the Congo shun any kind of visibility for fear of finding a long line of causes seeking financial aid.

areas across a broad geographic expanse with the new norm until a "norm cascade" or reversal of the norm is achieved. A much longer term way of approaching this change is to "infect" prestigious groups such as urban elites and wait until the norm eventually ripples out to remote areas (if facilities are available). The aim of girls' initiatives is to achieve a norm of participation as quickly as possible through widespread dissemination of messages about girls' education.

*Media contributions to SAGE activities.* Every SAGE country drew upon media support in communicating messages about girls' education. One lesson learned was that the business and media sectors are not distinct when it comes to financial and communication contributions. Both contribute resources, and in several countries both assisted in communicating important messages about girls' education. What became overwhelmingly clear in all countries, and particularly those like El Salvador that relied heavily on the media, was that girls' education issues became much more prominent in the public's attention through SAGE activities. Some of the particular circumstances that lead to the success of media initiatives are to 1) involve primary audience members in the development and dissemination of messages, 2) involve influential personalities in conveying the messages, 3) tailor messages to specific target audiences through, for example, local language broadcasts, 4) reinforce messages by communicating them often and in many forms so everyone is likely to see and be reminded of them over and over again, 5) engage the media in fact-finding activities so as to heighten their ownership of the educational process of information sharing, 6) use more widely accessible media such as radio that have proven effective in quickly reaching a broad audience.

*Limitations on the contributions of the media.* Approaching the media usually requires facilitation by influential patrons since airtime is costly and cannot be provided at no cost to more than a few worthy causes. Media involvement for these reasons is often limited in time, while the need for frequent and continuous reminders of the messages persists. Messages that are not well focused on target groups can miss their mark, or may be seen as only relevant to other groups. In societies where people are more trusting of personal interactions and advice, the impersonal nature of the media may not be enough to change attitudes or behavior. Again the efforts invested in mobilizing the media need to be weighed on a case by case basis against the benefits obtained and the loss of resources to initiatives where impact might have been greater.

## The religious sector

*Rationale for engaging the religious sector.* Social behavior is often reinforced directly or indirectly with religious rationales whether these come from authentic dogma or not. If left uncontested they gain the force of moral principle. The advantages of involving the religious sector are that its authorities can dispel misinformation about religious values concerning girls' education, thus easing restrictions on their participation. Even better is for them to articulate support for girls' education thus creating a positive reinforcement for participation.

*Religious sector contributions to SAGE activities.* Guinea and the Congo actively sought and received considerable support from the religious sector, in one case mainly Muslim and the other mainly Christian. In both cases religious leaders corrected misinformation about the position of religion regarding girls' education, and actively promoted girls' participation. In both countries, religious groups promoted fundraising campaigns contributing to education initiatives and the

support of needy students. Eliciting religious sector support requires: 1) understanding the role and standing of religious groups within the country's communities and knowing what stance they might take toward girls' education; 2) shaping the request for support in terms the religious group can identify with (for example, providing them with appropriate Koranic verses about education); and 3) knowing how religious reinforcement can be conveyed most effectively, and assisting in this dissemination (through media, sermons, events, brochures, etc.).

*Limitations on the contributions of the religious sector.* In some countries religious authorities play an obstructionist, or at best a passive role if asked to become involved in girls' education. El Salvador tailored its activities so as not to offend the conservative hierarchy of the church, at the same time trying to demonstrate that there was no conflict between girls' education and either culture or religion. In Morocco, GWEA organizers intentionally did not include religious leaders for fear they would try to block girls' education initiatives. Each country has to decide on an individual basis how important it is to involve the religious sector and whether they will contribute positively to girls' education aims. Key questions that need to be asked are where the religious sector stands on girls' education, whether the community respects their judgment, and whether they have traditionally been involved in education matters or need to be.

## The NGO/PVO sector

*Rationale:* Although only relatively recently (15 or so years) becoming active on the development scene, the NGO sector is nonetheless considered a traditional rather than a nontraditional sector. The NGO sector grew to fill needs that are still important today: to extend services quickly and reliably to local communities and to fill the gap left by government's inability to act effectively outside its institutional boundaries (for example, in communities). To prove effective, girls' education initiatives by their nature almost always have to be implemented in part or in whole in local communities with the assistance of NGOs and CBOs.

*NGO/PVO contributions to SAGE activities.* The two countries with the longest involvement in SAGE—Mali and Guinea—were the most active in engaging the PVO/NGO sectors, but Ghana, El Salvador, and the Congo also worked through established PVOs with local NGO and CBO partners. In both Mali and Guinea SAGE relied on PVO partners to oversee or implement project innovations. SAGE generally provided the development costs to produce programs, training, and products (such as life skills materials), but relied on the PVO/NGOs to provide the manpower, trainers of trainers and other necessities to disseminate them. The involvement of the PVO/NGOs worked best when 1) SAGE objectives were consistent with those of the PVO/NGOs, 2) SAGE initiatives enhanced activities of the PVOs/NGOs such as capacity-building of community groups, and 3) SAGE activities "respected" the ongoing culture and needs of those organizations.

*Limitations on PVO/NGO involvement.* PVOs usually have limited donor-funded contracts and therefore are time- and resource-bound, not to speak of being faced with very specific requirements for what they can and cannot do and what is ultimately required of them in terms of results. Some may find it difficult to expand their aims and objectives to incorporate SAGE interests, especially if it requires staff time and resources. Local NGOs, on the other hand, usually have more latitude in the types of activities they feel they can do, but work under constraints of personnel and resources that limit the geographical and other impacts they can

have without extra funding. To make a major impact on an issue that may be as widespread and complex as girls' education may require involving many NGO groups. When this is the case the need for coordination, training, resources, and staff becomes even more essential. Because they are resource-starved, NGOs have little capacity to expand on their own or engage new problems without financial support. SAGE's financial limitations make it difficult to work directly through NGOs unless their ongoing activities match SAGE requirements.

### The government sector

*Rationale for involving the government sector.* If only one sector is approached to address girls' participation, it probably should be the public government sector. This sector can affect both supply and demand issues of education. Some believe, however, that this sector should be circumvented because of the difficulty in moving bureaucracies to reform. If gaps exist, the argument goes, and the government has not effected changes, then other sectors of the society need to be brought in to fill the gaps. This argument neglects the role governments can play in disseminating and ultimately sustaining reforms once they prove useful.

*Government contributions to SAGE activities.* All the SAGE countries involved the government in significant ways, except the Congo. Ghana and Mali worked most closely with the public sector, Ghana through the Girls Education Unit and its network of field officers and Mali also through a Girls' Education Unit as well as other training, curriculum, and supervisory sections of the Ministry of Education. The Ghana Unit—somewhat uniquely—was dedicated to improving the outreach of its Girls' Education Officers down to the community level. The main constraints on their ability to impact community level problems were time and transportation. The Mali Girls' Education Unit assisted in preparing gender-sensitive training programs and materials as well as in the delivery of training and, on a limited basis, monitoring. But like all departments in the Ministry, the Unit was severely restricted in its outreach capacities. This deficit was made up to some degree in project areas by PVO/NGO fieldworkers who were SAGE's other main partners.

*Limitations of government contributions to SAGE goals.* The ability of the government sector to address girls' issues was limited in expected ways. The very short duration of SAGE activities in three of the countries prevented them from making significant changes in the way the formal system related to girls' problems. Indeed from several field reports, some of the significant constraints on girls' education, especially in persistence, completion, and performance, remain within the sphere of the government to address—in terms of program quality and ways of assessing and remediating performance.

## The mobilization of multiple sectors

SAGE also demonstrated a great deal about mobilizing multiple sectors successfully. The following actions showed evidence in SAGE countries of being important in engaging multiple partners.

*To identify and engage partners* it is useful to

- Convene national and international conferences that provide opportunities for identifying appropriate partners, assessing the strengths they may bring to girls' education, helping them become aware of girls' issues and become more active in addressing them
- Ensure broad representation of stakeholders when girls face a variety of constraints

- Convince potential partners that their involvement extends their own groups' objectives
- Solicit partner groups with similar interests (e.g. women's and child rights groups), as they are more likely to refocus their existing activities and resources to address issues of girls' education, and sustain them after the project

*To ensure effective actions* on behalf of girls' education there needs to be

- Leaders that can act as the catalyst and advocate on this issue
- Two types of partner groups: larger groups that represent a range of organizations and provide leadership and smaller working groups that take effective actions on their behalf
- Links/mechanisms forged between national, regional, and local levels built on a mutual vision for girls' education but with space for local groups to act and for the center to assist
- Coordination to avoid duplication and overlap and to direct partners to gaps and constraints they can address
- A means of reactivating and refocusing groups and activities when they are not effectively improving the conditions of girls' education
- Processes that engage main stakeholder groups in the diagnosis of constraints
- Processes that allow the main stakeholder groups to self direct the course of action to be taken
- Relationships with the media to spread coverage of messages and useful models
- Monitoring systems to measure and build upon successful interventions

*To sustain reforms* there needs to be

- Distilled experiences in guides, manuals, training modules, questionnaires, etc., that leave behind tested procedures for replicating successful initiatives
- Formalized and nonformalized institutional arrangements—networks, committees, assemblies, alliances—continuously energized to keep working on girls' issues
- A framework that officially recognizes the responsibilities and roles of local participation in solving problems and taking action
- Local participation in design and decisionmaking that make solutions more appropriate and more likely to be sustained
- Assistance in building the capacity of organizations to solve the long-term issues of girls' education on their own

## Conditions that increase the likelihood of success

Conditions for the success of multisectoral approaches

- Dynamic leaders at national, local, group, and community levels, in addition to technical people
- Partnerships built on respect for each other's strengths and a willingness to share responsibility and tasks
- Coordination of effort through productive links between partners
- Recognition of the knowledge and skills of local people who understand their own communities and know what are appropriate interventions
- Local ownership of problems and solutions
- It is important to build on existing structures that will exist after the project to increase the likelihood that the activities will be sustained; the same applies to building of cultural expectations that can also sustain the activities in the end.

SAGE experience suggests that nontraditional and traditional groups are more likely to be mobilized on behalf of girls' education if certain conditions exist. Most





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of these conditions are already known in the development literature to enhance the impact of initiatives. Consequently SAGE experience helps reinforce this knowledge (see best examples in brackets below).

*Flexible approaches.* While the focus should be on well-defined goals, the process of reaching them needs to be creatively open to making use of all relevant opportunities (Guinea).

*Local ownership of process and products.* The solutions and approaches used to address girls' education problems should be ones devised or at a minimum fully adopted by local people. This is more likely if local people are supported in decisions about solving their own problems and assisted in developing the capacities to do so. Ownership is important if solutions are to be carried forward and possibly extended (Mali: life skills, Ghana: handbook development)

*Local fit.* The process and products of interventions should be appropriate to local conditions (El Salvador) and relevant to local needs (Mali). The local context creates opportunities and sets limits on what can be done, how it can be done and who can do it.

*Supported by local values.* Outcomes are likely to be greater if congruent with local value systems (the Congo and Guinea).

*Charismatic, active leadership at all levels.* Impact is usually greater when active national and local leaders take the responsibility for leveraging human and other resources and keeping supporters focused on the goal (Guinea and El Salvador).

*Sustainability through tools/modules/trained trainers.* Capacity-building investments are more likely to be sustained if tools and training modules are available so that trained trainers can continue to build skills as needed. These tools are more likely to be used over time if they have been locally developed (Ghana and Mali) and are perceived as useful. Institutionalized routines for meetings, reporting, and monitoring also help sustain effective networks over time (Guinea).

## Activities that promote girls' education

The following activities were implemented in one or more of the SAGE country programs (best examples are in brackets below). While most activities are not new to girls' education they gain importance because national or local people identified them and invested in them as ways of increasing girls' participation.

### To change attitudes that constrain girls' participation

- Raising awareness about the importance of girls' education in communities (Mali, Ghana, Guinea)
- Correcting misinformation and dispelling myths, and reinforcing new norms of participation through enlisting the support of religious leaders (Guinea, the Congo)

### To promote greater female participation and role models for girls in society

- Encouraging more representation of women in community groups and district assemblies (Ghana, Guinea and Mali)
- Training women for a more active leadership role in SMCs, PTAs, local alliances, and district assemblies (Ghana, Guinea and Mali)

- Providing images and information about female role models in schools (Guinea)

### To establish a better environment for girls' education

- Involving community partners in identifying local constraints and solutions and learning to make plans of action to overcome them (Mali, Ghana)
- Building latrines for girls to encourage better attendance and persistence (Ghana, Guinea and Mali)
- Sensitizing community members and school staff to gender bias in girls' education and implementing girl-friendly classroom practices (the Congo, Ghana, Guinea and Mali)
- Parents' setting curfew hours for school nights, dedicating the proceeds from specified land plots to girls' education, monitoring the attendance of girls and teachers (the Congo and Ghana)
- Providing more relevant life skills content in school programs (Mali)
- Providing girls' clubs and mentoring groups that among other activities tutor girls (Ghana and Mali)

### To expand the resources for girls' education

- Exploring income generating ideas to reduce the burden of school costs on parents (the Congo, Guinea and Mali)
- Raising funds from multiple sectors and mobilizing other human and material resources from local communities (Guinea and Mali)

### To advocate for girls' education

- Involving well-known personalities to promote girls' education (El Salvador, Guinea)
- Communicating messages broadly through various channels including religious organizations, national meetings, national and local radio (for reception and local languages), TV, newspapers, bean bags, school book covers, etc. (Guinea, El Salvador, the Congo)
- Being sensitive to gender issues in all activities that touch upon project initiatives (e.g., ensuring female participation in SMCs and PTAs) that relate to solving girls' education issues; the actions of project implementers often speak louder than their words (Ghana)

### To build capacity to solve the problems of girls' education

- Building the capacity of the system at all levels to address girls' issues (Ghana)
- Building the capacity of community members to plan and undertake actions (Ghana, Guinea, Mali, and the Congo)
- Training local women for leadership roles (Mali, Guinea)
- Making people aware that the poor participation of girls in primary education is an issue of inequity and social injustice (Mali, El Salvador, the Congo)

## Outline of a process for mobilizing sectors

Processes were organized in each SAGE country around the similar needs of understanding girls' issues, identifying and forming partnerships, building capacity in relevant actors, developing tools to achieve improvements, communicating critical messages and experiences, expanding resources, and developing sustainable institutional arrangements.

A process model offers the best blueprint for communicating how an approach might be implemented. The composite model below extracts from SAGE country

experiences a step-by-step scenario for addressing girls' issues through a multisectoral approach. Not every country used every step, nor did they necessarily use them in this particular order. Sometimes they were accomplished informally or as in the Congo and El Salvador only partially. In any case to be used effectively the model would need to be adapted in each country to the context and the need. A process model, or the consecutive steps taken to implement a program, simply implies that there is a logic or rationale that drives the sequence of steps toward a certain goal.

A full-blown multisectoral approach might therefore have taken the following steps:

- Consult with influential actors in girls' education to identify a list of relevant issues and potential partners. These consultations serve as background to begin the understanding of girls' constraints.
- Prepare convincing arguments about the importance of girls' education in the country context to show the need to address these issues. In some instances a strategic choice may be to draw parallels with other relevant issues (e.g., life skills and FGM in Mali) as an entry point for opening dialogue and reflection on girls' education as a greater issue of gender equity.
- Identify a dynamic and well-connected country coordinator to conduct the process.
- Convene formal or informal gatherings of potential partners at national or local levels or both, simultaneously or separately. With them identify the needs that should and can be addressed, an inventory of their institutional capacities and their willingness to address them, and the additional support they would need to solve them. Determine whether there are additional constraints and where partners might be found with capacities to address them. Plan institutional arrangements such as routine meetings, working groups, periodic conferences, networks, etc. to coordinate and implement agreed-upon actions.
- Agree with partners on a plan of action to identify constraints, determine potential solutions, plan for capacity building, expand resources, organize implementation activities, agree on complementary roles and responsibilities, and on working groups. Begin activities.
- Engage the media to cover activities and communicate messages, plans, and goals. Arrange for longer term advocacy and reporting of progress on girls' issues. Consult with target audiences about the issues, the substance of convincing arguments, and any other aspect relevant to effective communication of messages.
- In the case of local community level partners, work through existing organizations or networks of community groups that can act to increase girls' participation in communities. Where these do not exist try to identify local facilitators who can take long-term responsibility for mobilizing, implementing, and following-up activities.
- Develop and implement capacity building training and the tools needed by national and local groups to implement solutions to girls' problems, preferably with their involvement. This is likely to entail direct training for such capacities as action planning, fundraising, account management, monitoring and evaluation, etc., where the number to be trained is limited and small. The training will be indirect—training of trainers—where those to be trained are numerous, spread over large distances, and training needs to continue with new groups over time (e.g., community mobilization, gender sensitivity training).

- Put in place monitoring and assessment mechanisms that provide data upon which informed decisions can be made and progress can be charted.
- Support periodic events to feedback results and accomplishments to the stakeholder groups, and take these opportunities to recognize individual and collective efforts.

These generic steps do not include such essential ongoing tasks as the importance of building strong relationships among and with partners, continuous discussions and meetings to ensure smooth implementation, mechanisms to coordinate and respond to identified needs, and opportunities to reflect and make midcourse corrections to improve results.

# 6. Conclusions: Putting multisectoral approaches in perspective

This section draws general conclusions about multisectoral approaches and their utility in addressing the issues of girls' education.

SAGE experience shows multisectoral approaches to be viable and valid tools for addressing complex development problems in a variety of contexts. Because they are tools, however, it is important to know when, how, and for what purposes they can best be used. When issues of girls' education are complex, a multisectoral approach allows them to be addressed holistically through multiple-agents, multiple-methods, and multiple-solutions. Partners from a range of sectors, levels, and interests bring different strengths to bear on these problems.

## Multisectoral approaches are valid tools for solving complex problems

The reservation in using this approach is in contexts where a smaller number of significant constraints can be resolved through focused interventions that do not require multiple actors. Involving numerous actors requires time, energy, and resources, and if these can be conserved with more modest interventions it certainly makes sense to do so. This caveat underlines the importance of understanding the main constraints on girls' participation in any given context so remedies can be applied that are proportionate to the need. The multisectoral approach most likely worked well in SAGE countries because the problems of girls' education were so multifaceted.

All SAGE countries showed clear evidence that their multisectoral approaches produced:

- A greater overall consciousness of girls' issues, placing them in most cases on the national agenda, permanently, importantly, and in cases like El Salvador and Ghana in places where they could not be overlooked
- An increased number and variation in the actors working on behalf of girls' education
- A greater number of the social, cultural, and economic constraints on girls' participation being addressed in the project areas

Other advantages of the approach were greater understanding of and sensitivity to broader issues affecting girls and women, more positive attitudes towards girls' educational participation, in some countries, religious endorsement of the importance of girls' education, expanded resources for interventions, and more creative solutions to issues of girls' education. To the extent that these results were accomplished, it is likely that the multisectoral approach increased the rates of girls' participation.

Other social advantages of multisectoral approaches are that

- They introduce and model participatory processes that increase the overall capacity of civil society organizations to solve these and other development problems
- The project insistence on inclusionary processes gives greater representation to women and girls in decisions about their own lives thus effecting changes that may prove significant over time

## Multisectoral approaches create long-term enabling environments at the same time that they produce immediate results

A tension often exists in development projects between the need to build long-term enabling environments that produce more and better results over time and the need for direct actions that produce immediate but sometimes limited results. Multisectoral approaches permit a mix of both. They create long-term enabling environments by changing attitudes and behaviors, engendering greater sensitivity

to gender issues, expanding the resource base, and developing committed actors who are willing to continue to produce results. These approaches achieve immediate results by strengthening the capacities of partners to address girls' issues more effectively now. Such approaches act to reorganize and reenergize old relationships and turn them toward solving more of the same or new problems. Under ideal circumstances these actions ripple across communities and national groups to speed up the process of reform.

The SAGE countries invested in initiatives to produce both kinds of results: immediate actions to produce results quickly and more permanent institutional arrangements to continue to produce results. Examples can be found in Guinea through the activities of its General Assembly and local alliances, Mali through training in local leadership and embedding life skills and training materials in ongoing government reforms; Ghana through strengthening capacities of government officials while immediately mobilizing 35 villages to support girls at particular risk; El Salvador through close connections with the National Secretariat of the Family; and the Congo through links to religious institutions. Once partners are organized in networks and alliances with objectives, roles, and routines, their relationships are more likely to last over time.

Creating long-term enabling conditions takes time and energy, and the full impact of these measures is often not seen until enough time has passed for the effects to emerge. Each SAGE country program had to make decisions about balancing resources invested in long-term effects against resources available for immediate action. Both types of investment occurred within the multisectoral framework.

The important lesson to be learned from these observations is the importance of focus on obtaining comprehensive results as quickly as possible whether that occurs through short- or long-term interventions. The aim is not to mobilize sectors for their own sake, nor even to achieve intermediate results that are assumed to produce final outcomes, but to improve and increase the educational participation of girls by all the measures that ensure this will happen.

## Multisectoral approaches tend to be more effective when implemented in certain ways

SAGE experience suggests that multisectoral approaches are more likely to prove effective if organized in the following ways.

### The multiple sectors and levels need to be productively linked

A key ingredient of success in these approaches is productive links between the multiple sectors and levels, built on mutual vision yet with space for partner organizations to contribute their unique strengths to common goals. Without these links, efforts become scattered, overlap, or leave gaps that reduce the level of final impact. Morocco, in an earlier phase of the GWEA, depended largely on efforts of volunteers from women's organizations to implement its initiatives. These women achieved successes at the national level and, through branch volunteers, in a few local villages. They felt however that results were limited by the absence of regional groups that could have acted to coordinate interventions in a much larger subset of villages. It was not efficient to act one-on-one with local villages.

To ensure coordinated impact, the multiple sectors need to be linked horizontally across levels and vertically down through different levels—national, regional, and local. Each sector and each level contributes added value, and in combination at one or more levels the effects can become synergistic. All the SAGE countries with

the exception of Ghana (three levels) worked at two levels—national and local. The national level contributed vision, leadership, and coordination, while local agents ensured the local fit for each solution. Both levels contributed human and financial resources to extend the effort. SAGE found that even the poorest communities could mobilize resources to solve local problems without large infusions of outside financial support. Through technical assistance, SAGE offered expanded knowledge in the form of sensitivity-training and consciousness-raising activities. This knowledge acted as a powerful tool to mobilize attitude and ultimately behavior changes with regard to girls' education.

Guinea is the best example of this many-layered coordination. In Guinea, SAGE established coordinating mechanisms for three national organizations—a large assembly of influential stakeholders whose support for girls' education attracted national attention, an executive committee with a few active members who initiated actions on behalf of the assembly, and a committee that was legally constituted to raise funds. At the local level, SAGE supported local alliances in their efforts to mobilize community actions. A "media task force" of national journalists regularly visited the local alliances to collect data on and publish the results of local initiatives in girls' education. This coordinated linkage served several purposes: to avoid duplication of effort, ensure the capacity to act effectively, provide a two-way communication between levels, and to gather information on and publicly recognize local accomplishments in girls' education.

## Multiple sectors can be mobilized through a variety of entry points and at different times

SAGE country coordinators found it useful—and in some cases necessary—in initiating multisectoral approaches to find "avenues of convenience" for becoming involved in a country's ongoing organizational relationships. These convenient entry points usually became apparent within a very short time, and were often seized upon "opportunistically" because an organization was already implementing activities related to girls' issues or because it had similar interests and was open to expanding its efforts through cooperation with SAGE.

A similar point can be made about the order in which sectors are integrated into the common framework. Sectors can be mobilized all at once through, for example, a national conference or they can be added consecutively as need for their contributions become apparent or new facets of a problem emerge.

In Ghana, for example, SAGE entered the organizational arena through the newly formed national Girls' Education Unit that needed strengthening to address girls' issues effectively. In Mali, the logical point of entry became the networks of community schools supported by PVOs/NGOs. SAGE provided life skills materials, teacher and community leadership training, and action planning, all enhancements to the ongoing community school program while sharpening the focus on girls. While SAGE/Ghana started with the national level and moved to the district and later the community levels, SAGE/Mali was most active in community level partnerships even while working also in partnership with the Girls' Unit in the Ministry of Education. Establishing credibility first with "partners of convenience" made it possible without losing time for SAGE to enter into the complex system of institutional relationships and begin to assess where other partnerships might be established to further the goals of the project.

Entry points that are "opportunistic" (in the positive sense of the word) illustrate several other elements that have become apparent in SAGE's implementation of the multisectoral approach:

- The need for flexibility so implementers can take advantage of opportunities that arise to form new partnerships, try different modes of implementation, and provide needed types of technical assistance. This flexibility however should be goal-focused, with activities and partners chosen for what they can contribute to improved results.
- The need to be context-driven, that is to be aware of the conditions and environments in which the approach is to be launched and to modify the approach to fit these conditions.
- The need to think in terms of institutional systems. While it is usually possible to enter a system at almost any convenient point, it is also important to include any group that is likely to have an impact on the problem as a whole. Leaving a significant gap in the institutional partners (as in any system) can lead to flawed reforms.

"Entry points" as a concept can be applied to other aspects of implementation. In Mali, SAGE support for the development of life skills materials and drawing together writers from the Ministry of Education as well as NGO field workers had an unexpected benefit—that the materials would become part of curriculum reform. In this case, entry into one activity led ultimately to entry into a more institutionalized process and thus to a more sustainable product. Similarly, the efforts to involve more girls in schooling in Ghana led to efforts to train women in communities to assume action-oriented leadership roles. Thus, the support for girls' issues led to support for wider issues of women in society.

The main lesson to be learned from observations about entry points and the order in which sectors are incorporated is one based on logic. Sectors should not be mobilized merely because of a theoretical assumption that all or even designated sectors add inevitably to the solution of girls' issues, but rather because they become indispensable to the solution of a particular girls' issue at a particular time.

### Forming productive partnerships requires a particular mindset

An environment conducive to productive partnerships requires implies a relationship of equal status, where partners solve problems together and each respects the opinions and interests of the others. It implies sharing responsibilities and feeling confident that partners will handle their share. It means sharing the burdens of implementation and making sure there is space for every group's contributions. It is a two-way street, even in such activities as capacity building, where the technician needs to respect the skills and knowledge the trainee brings to the effort. While all of these ideas are part of conventional wisdom, they are not always carried out in practice.

## Guiding principles in implementing multisectoral approaches

Those addressing girls' education issues need to be aware of some key principles in implementing multisectoral approaches.

*Understand fully the nature of the problem,* if for no other reason than to know whether a multisectoral approach is appropriate, and if so, which sectors need to be involved immediately. El Salvador, for example, saw the importance of immediately mobilizing assistance from the media in order to convince the public that girls' issues actually existed.

*Focus decisions on promoting outcome results.* Intermediate results—trainings conducted, classrooms built, villages mobilized—can easily become the measures of project success rather than the indicators of girls' participation. While some indicators such as primary completion take several years to show progress, others like changes in attendance, initial enrollment, grade completion, and academic performance can be observed within the first couple years.

*Test assumptions about what works in girls' education.* Opportunities arise during project implementation that can advance our knowledge of what works in girls' education. For example, does the provision of latrines actually increase the attendance of girls in a particular country? Without this knowledge, interventions can be scatter-shot and not produce optimum impact on problems.

*Experiment with interventions to determine what is most cost effective.* Formative experiments are small tests of different solutions conducted during project implementation to see which are the most effective. They do not need to take much time or energy. For example if video-viewing is thought to cut down on homework time and/or prompt attendance, the community might decide to ban this viewing for a period of time to see if it makes a difference. If it does, the results should be disseminated, plans made to continue the ban, and other communities informed of the findings through partner organizations. These experiments provide information for decisionmaking, help in solving problems, provide motivating feed-back, and create a more reflective, problem-solving atmosphere in which to address issues.

*Keep ongoing progress matrices.* There are numerous ways that progress on girls' education might be mapped. The two most obvious are: 1) tracking important indicators (attendance, initial enrollment, persistence through primary grades, performance, and completion) for target project areas and noting progress; 2) mapping solutions such as specific advocacy interventions, course relevance (life skills materials), sensitivity training, community mobilization, action planning etc., against partners who have capacity and are taking responsibility for implementing them. The tasks and progress toward implementing them can also be marked alongside progress toward overall objectives, to ensure that expected improvements are taking place. Such progress matrices are motivating for implementers, parents, school personnel and students, especially when some sort of public acknowledgment is given to those who meet their goals.

*Address as many other educational gaps as possible.* While considerable attention may be given to enrolling girls, a strong deterrent to their continuation in many countries is poor performance due to weak academic programs. While some problems of poor performance—e.g., irregular attendance of students and teachers, and conflicting outside activities that prevent homework completion or cause children to come to school tired, can be solved through community efforts, many others require reform of teaching-learning practices and materials. Much is now known about how to correct these problems—including the importance of well-defined learning objectives based on skill development, practice of skills in many forms, diagnostic testing, and education components all focused on helping children learn. Girls' issues that relate to continuation, dropout, completion, and performance usually need to be addressed through public sector organizations, once again confirming the importance of this sector in any overall solution to girls' issues.

*Resist the tendency as outsiders (foreign or national) to become the major actors* in raising funds, deciding and implementing activities, and in taking on the responsibility for solving problems. Balance is required between outside experience and technical skills and local knowledge of needs and solutions. This caution relates to ownership of responsibility and the human tendency to remain passive when others take over responsibility.

*Establish the necessary conditions for success,* which are ownership, local fit, local involvement, coordination, and active, dynamic leadership.

*Be aware that individuals and groups need to feel rewarded* for pursuing these objectives—with recognition, girl-friendly schools, and/or clear and apparent benefits from their efforts.

## Final note

SAGE experience has shown that multiple sectors can be mobilized to act effectively on behalf of girls' education, that they can overcome many of the constraints preventing girls' participation, and that they can do this while relying mainly on their own resources. This SAGE evidence provides a strong mandate for using multisectoral approaches in addressing complex issues of girls' education.

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**Multisectoral Approaches in Promoting Girls' Education**
**Lessons Learned in Five SAGE Countries**
*by Andrea Rugh*

The report describes the "multisectoral" approach to promoting girls' education as it was originally envisioned by USAID and as it evolved into the implementation strategy used by the Strategies for Advancing Girls' Education project (SAGE) in its five countries. The country cases illustrate a variety of ways the approach can be implemented in terms of differing local rationales, partners, activities, results, and efforts to promote sustainability. The cases suggest lessons about implementation and present general conclusions about multisectoral strategies as tools for improving the conditions for girls' education. The report also provides guidance and advice for making the best use of multisectoral approaches.

Andrea Rugh, Ph.D., is a researcher and educator with more than thirty years of experience working in developing countries in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

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